

Beaks and Feet—Built-in Bird Tools

Theme:

All animals are equipped with built-in body tools that help capture and eat food, which is a key element to survival. Depending on a bird's particular habitat and needs, its beak and feet serve very important functions to help it survive.

Feet

Think about your feet—what do you use them for? (walking, running, climbing)

People also have hands, but if we walked on four feet our hands would be considered feet! What do we use our hands for? (picking up things, grabbing onto something, writing, holding things, etc.)

Birds have two feet and no hands! Their feet have to do a lot of work for them. Birds can walk on their feet, but what are some other ideas that you think birds might use their feet for? (swimming, holding on to branches, catching prey)

Activities: *Note: photos and supplies for this are in the bird crate at the VN Center at Walden Ponds*

Feet are Neat photos

- Look at diagram of bird feet—how are these birds equipped with the feet they need?
- Put photos of bird feet out to look at. What do you think these feet are used for?
- Place photos out to look at. Match birds with their feet. Talk about:
 - Herons use their feet to walk in the mud so they don't sink—long, skinny toes are better for that than big, flat feet.
 - Woodpeckers need sharp little claws to hold on to tree trunks and branches. They have two toes facing forward and two facing backwards to give them better balance.
 - Ducks have webbed feet to help them swim, just like flippers.
 - Eagles have large talons to catch their prey. They can grab a fish right out of the water.
 - Sparrows have agile little feet with tiny claws to grab onto branches so they can hold on tight.

Beaks

Have kids open their mouths and look inside their neighbor's mouth. What do you see? Lots of teeth! What do we use our teeth for? (chewing, biting)

Birds don't have teeth at all—they have beaks. And remember, they don't have hands. So they have to catch and eat their food using only their beaks and feet!

Beaks vary with different species, depending on the bird's habitat and food needs. Let's take a look at how some beaks work for different birds.

Use the bird beak box. Place different "food" supplies on a table and spread out the various tools. Have kids play with the tools to see which tools work best for picking up different types of food. Look at photos of different beaks and see if they resemble any of the tools you used.